

Remarks on Rules Committee Budget Request

Testimony given before the House Administration Committee on the Rules Committee Budget

March 10, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Ms. Millender-McDonald, members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to be here today with my friend, David Dreier, to present to you our budget request for the Committee on Rules. David has made a very thorough presentation with which I agree. I only want to touch on a few items.

Mr. Chairman, the practice of committing 1/3 of the salary dollars to the minority when Democrats were in control has held us in good standing since 1994. David has continued the practice of a non-partisan administration of the Committee and has provided us with 1/3 of the committee staff slots and 1/3 of the dollars necessary to fund those slots.

This Congress, David and I are requesting another modest increase primarily to address salary

issues. As you know the great majority of our budget goes to staff salaries. I think that I have one of the most dedicated staffs in the House. They have specialized knowledge that has been built over the years, and we need to do our best to keep these people working in the House.

Mr. Chairman, in order to keep these folks from being lured away to the private sector, we need to keep salaries competitive. This budget proposal makes a step in the right direction. Historically, the Rules Committee has not asked for the substantial increases in funding that other committees have and as a result finds itself playing catch-up in the area of salaries. While I understand the fiscal restraints in play this year, I hope that the Committee will be generous so the Committee can make up some of that lost ground in regard to staff salary levels. Under the budget request, I will be able to make modest cost-of-living adjustments to reward my staff for the great job they do.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to the increase in staff slots, while I support the request for an increase and I believe that it is justified, I must point out that the funding request -- which will amount to approximately \$32,000 for this year for the minority -- will not provide the dollars to pay any salary for the additional minority slot. I would hope that you and the Committee will keep that in mind when considering the funding level provided to the Rules Committee.

I would also like to speak in support of the technology and equipment requests. Many times the Rules Committee finds itself in the rather unique position of being the first Committee to receive copies of bills and conference reports. The ability to quickly disseminate this material to the membership of the House has become an important duty of the Committee and it needs the technical resources to make that happen. David has assured me that all of the minority's technology requests including computers will be met and I thank him for it.

Let me conclude by reiterating that we on the Democratic side of the Rules Committee support the request that the Chairman and I present to you this morning. On that note, Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to answer any questions that you might have.